

Message Text

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SUBJ: OPPOSITION PARTIES IN SINGAPORE

REF: SINGAPORE A-135

1. SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE SKETCHES BRIEFLY THE OPPOSITION
ISSUES AND CANDIDATES IN THE CURRENT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN,
REPORTED IN MORE DETAIL REPAIR. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH ELECTIONS NOW CALLED FOR DECEMBER 23, THE VARIOUS
OPPOSITION GROUPS, CHARACTERIZED BY FEW NEW FACES BUT SEVERAL
NEW COALITIONS, ARE NOW IN THE OPEN AND SCURRYING TO SLAP
TOGETHER SOME ORGANIZATION IN TIME TO DO BATTLE WITH THE
PAP. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A NEAR-TOTAL ABSENCE OF DATA ON VOTER
PREFERENCES, AND 17 PCT OF THE ELECTORATE ARE NEW VOTERS
(AGE 21 TO 25), THE OPPOSITION GENERALLY CONCEDES THE CONTINUED
PAP CONTROL OF PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, IT HOPES TO INCREASE ITS
1972 COMBINED OVERALL OPPOSITION VOTE FROM 30 PCT TO ABOUT
40 PCT THIS TIME AROUND, AND TO CREATE AN OPPOSITION PRESENCE IN
PARLIAMENT.

3. SEVERAL FAMILIAR THEMES DOMINATE MOST OPPOSITION PARTY
PLATFORMS: THE ARROGANT AND INSENSITIVE BUREAUCRACY, THE
RISING COST OF SERVICES, BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY, MALAY
MINORITY TREATMENT, REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING, AND AHGREATER
SHARE FOR WORKERS IN BENEFITS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH. ALTHOUGH

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THESE ARE THE ISSUES MOST FREQUENTLY CITED BY THE OPPOSITION

AS REASONS FOR THE ELECTORATE TO CASE THEIR VOTES AGAINST THE PAP, MANY ANTI-PAP VOTERS WILL BE PREDOMINANTLY MOTIVATED BY PERSONAL GRIPEs AGAINST THE PAP, CONCERN OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF THE MALAY MINORITY, OR A GENERAL DESIRE TO PRESERVE THE PRINCIPLE OF A LIVELY AND HONEST (IF NOT EFFECTIVE) OPPOSITION PRESENCE. ALTHOUGH THE WORKER'S PARTY HAS CALLED FOR A MORE GENUINELY NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES SHOULD NOT BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE CAMPAIGN.

4. THE THREE MAJOR OPPOSITION ACTORS THIS ELECTION WILL BE THE WORKER'S PARTY (WP), THE JOINT OPPOSITION COUNCIL (JOC), AND THE UNITED PEOPLES FRONT (UPF).

5. THE WORKER'S PARTY IS A MULTIRACIAL NON-COMMUNIST SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION AND IS REGARDED BY MOST OBSERVERS AS THE GROUP PROVIDING THE MOST SERIOUS COMPETITION FOR THE PAP THIS ELECTION. THE WP WILL CONTEST 33 SEATS ON A PLATFORM, "TOWARDS A CARING SOCIETY", LARGELY CONCERNED WITH MORE EQUITABLE SHARING OF WEALTH IN SINGAPORE.

6. THE JOINT OPPOSITION COUNCIL IS THE BARISAN-INSPIRED ELECTIONS COALITION CONSISTING OF THE BARISAN SOSIALIS (BSS), THE UNITED FRONT (UF), ONE FACTION OF PEKEMAS (PKMS), AND THE JUSTICE PARTY. THE JOC PROPOSES TO CONTEST 36 SEATS IN AN ELECTORAL PACT WITH THE WP. THE JOC PROGRAM REFLECTS HEAVY BARISAN INPUT AND LEADERSHIP. THE BARISAN SOSIALIS, HISTORICALLY A COMMUNIST FRONT, HAS BEEN FURTHER WEAKENED BY THE REDEVELOPMENT OF ITS AREAS OF TRADITIONAL SUPPORT AND THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF COMMUNIST CADRE LEADERSHIP. THE BSS WILL FIELD ONLY SIX CANDIDATES OWING TO FINANCIAL MANPOWER DIFFICULTIES. THE UNITED FRONT TARGETS ON THE CHINESE EDUCATED ELEMENT. CREATED AFTER THE 1972 ELECTIONS, IT HOPES TO FIELD 20 CANDIDATES. PEKEMAS (PKMS), A MALAY NATIONALIST PARTY, IS SPLIT BETWEEN FACTIONS ALLIED TO THE JOC AND TO THE UNITED PEOPLE'S FRONT. THE JOC-ALLIED ELEMENT OF PKMS WILL CONTEST TWO SEATS. THE JUSTICE PARTY, DESPITE BICKERING IN ITS LEADERSHIP OVER THE PARTY'S DEFECTION FROM THE UPF TO THE JOC, EXPECTS NONE-THELESS TO CONTEST EIGHT SEATS.

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9. THE UNITED PEOPLE'S FRONT IS A MISH-MASH COALITION OF THE UNITED NATIONAL FRONT AND OTHER MINOR PARTIES AND FACTIONS THAT REFLECT THE TASTE OF THEIR LEADER, HARBANS SINGH, FOR INVECTIVE AND MUDSLINGING. BY REFUSING TO JOIN THE JOC AND WP IN AN ELECTORAL PACT, THE UPF DESTROYED THE OPPOSITION'S ATTEMPT AT A UNITED FRONT. HOWEVER, THE HALF DOZEN LACKLUSTER UPF CANDIDATES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO SPLIT SIGNIFICANTLY THE ANTI-PAP VOTE.
HOLDRIDGE

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